

# Wisconsin Black Bear Harvest Report 2013

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## **Abstract**

Wisconsin bear hunters killed 3,952 black bears during the 2013 season. This was 15% lower than the 2012 kill of 4,646 bears. The 2013 kill was comprised of 51% males, 48% females, and 1% unknowns. The three leading counties of kill were Bayfield, Rusk, and Price.

## **Background**

Wisconsin requires non-Chippewa hunters to obtain a bear harvest permit to kill a bear. The state is divided into four Bear Management Zones (BMZ, Fig. 1), and hunters are required to apply for a permit within one of those zones. Kill permits are distributed through a preference point system giving unsuccessful applicants who applied, but did not receive a permit in previous years the first chance to receive a kill permit the following year. Each kill permit allows the taking of one adult bear not accompanied by a cub or cubs in the specified zone. A permit to pursue bear is available to all unsuccessful harvest permit applicants who request it; however this permit does not allow the killing of a bear.

Wisconsin's bear season has opened on the first Wednesday after Labor Day since the 2000 season. The 2013 bear season ran from 4 September through 8 October (35 days). In the northern 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the state (BMZ A, B and D), hunting with the use of dogs was allowed 4 September – 1 October while the use of bait was allowed during 11 September – 8 October. Hunters in the southern 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the state (BMZ C) could hunt the entire 35-day season with the use of bait and all methods not utilizing dogs.

## **Methods**

Wisconsin requires non-Chippewa bear hunters to register all bear at a designated WDNR registration station. An upper first premolar is collected at the time of registration for age analysis. Data on bear harvested by Chippewa tribal members on ceded lands were obtained from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). All kill data is entered into the DNR-centralized computer system by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

## **Results**

A total of 106,573 people applied for 8,560 black bear harvest permits in 2013. The number of applicants increased by 2.1% and the number of permits decreased 5.0% between 2012 and 2013 (Tables 1 and 9). A total of 8,560 permits were offered to hunters prior to the season. A statewide tetracycline mark-recapture study in 2006 and 2011 resulted in an increased population estimate from previous population estimates for the state. While bear numbers have dropped in parts of the state, the Northwest area of the state continues to have good numbers of bear and permits have remained high in this area.

During the 2013 season, 8,560 hunters killed 3,952 black bears (46.2% success rate), compared to 4,646 taken in 2012. Males comprised 50.7% (2,005), females 47.8% (1,888) of the harvest (Table 2, Fig. 2). The sex was not reported for 59 (1.5%) of the bears killed.

The Northern Region had the highest bear kill (3,072) followed by West Central (529), and Northeast (348) regions (Table 2). Most bears were shot in Zone A (1,249) followed by Zones D (1,179), C (1,029), and B (490) (Table 3, Fig. 1). The five leading counties of kill were Bayfield (423), Rusk (316), Price (290), Douglas (260) and Sawyer (254) (Table 4, Fig. 3). Black bear kill by deer management unit can be found in Table 5 and Figure 4. This years harvest was below the record harvest of 2010 but the fifth highest in the history of the state.

The number of bear taken over bait alone (2,649; Table 6) was greater than the number shot over dogs (1,194; includes bear shot over dogs and bait). Seventy-four bear were taken without the use of dogs or bait. Gun hunters took a total of 3,349 bear, whereas archers killed 556; 12 bear were killed with unreported weapon type (Table 6). Table 7 and Figure 5 summarize the historical Wisconsin black bear kill from 1957 to 2013.

Chippewa hunters killed 35 bear in 2013 (Tables 8 and 9); this was less than the 46 killed in 2012. More information on the Chippewa bear kill can be obtained by contacting the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861.

A total of 800 black bear complaints were filed from April-December 2013. This was fewer than the number of complaints (1,057) filed in 2012. As a result, 487 bear were captured and relocated from problem areas. This was less than the 678 that were moved in 2012.

Six nuisance bear shooting permits and thirty-eight agricultural damage bear shooting permits were issued in thirteen different counties during the late summer and fall of 2013. One hundred sixty-four kill tags were issued to these permit holders; tag numbers ranged from 1 to 15 for each permit holder. At least forty-three bear were killed under the agriculture damage shooting permits. No bears were killed on the nuisance permits. In 2012, Forty-two agriculture damage bear shooting permits were issued with one hundred eleven bears being killed, and one nuisance bear shooting permit was issued in 2012 with no bears being killed under that permit.

A prolonged winter and late arriving spring pushed back the growing season in much of the central and especially the northern parts of the state. This meant that many of the soft and hard mast crops were not fully mature until just before or during the bear season. The corn crop was also late in maturing; this may have led to many bears using natural foods during the first part of the bear hunting season. Many bait stations continued to be visited by bears with at least some degree of activity throughout much of the hunting season. Much of September saw average to slightly above average temperatures with below normal precipitation. This should have been conducive to hunters pursuing bears. The 2013 bear kill of 3,952 was the fifth highest ever and right at the WDNR harvest goal of 4,000 bears. Hunter success in 2013 was 46%, below the long-term average of 56%.

The WDNR Black Bear Advisory Committee, with support from GLIFWC, USFS, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress established a harvest goal of 4,700 bears for the 2014 season. A total of 10,340 black bear harvest permits will be available to hunters to achieve this goal.

**Table 1.** *Harvest goal, number of permits issued, bear kill and percent success, by zone for the 2013 black bear season.*

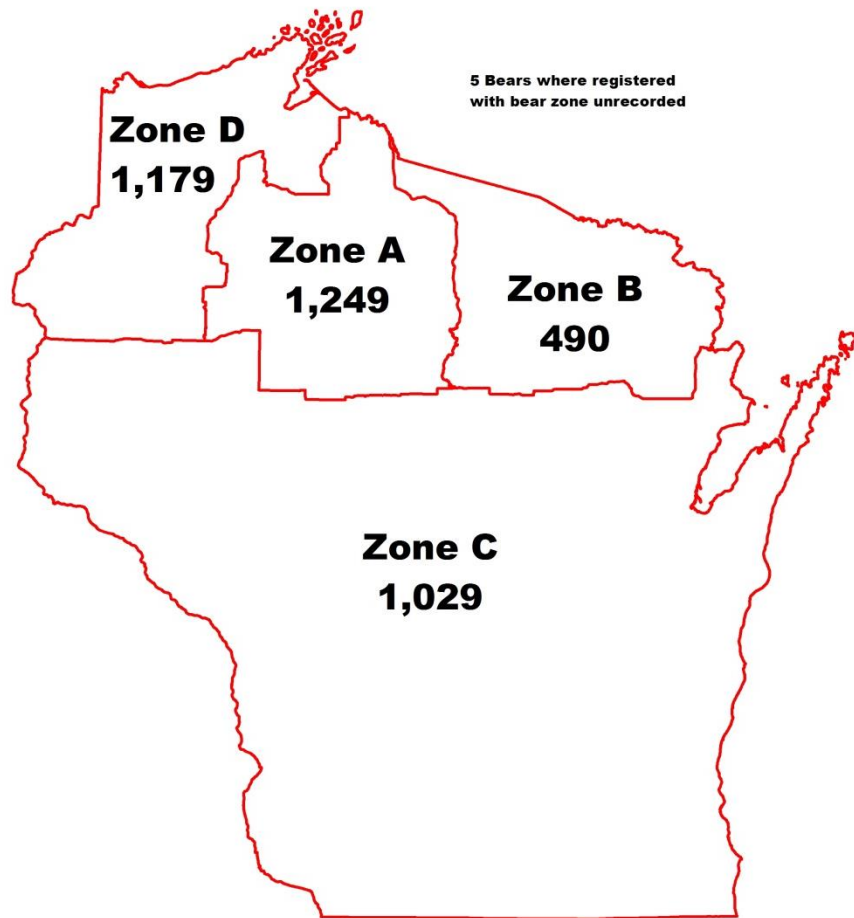
Zone	Harvest Goal	Permits Issued	Black Bear Kill	Permit Success
A	1,150	2,130	1,249	59%
B	450	690	490	78%
C	1,200	4,110	1,029	25%
D	1,200	1,630	1,179	72%
Unknown			5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>8,560</b>	<b>3,952</b>	<b>46%</b>

**Table 2.** *Black bear kill by WDNR region, 2013.*

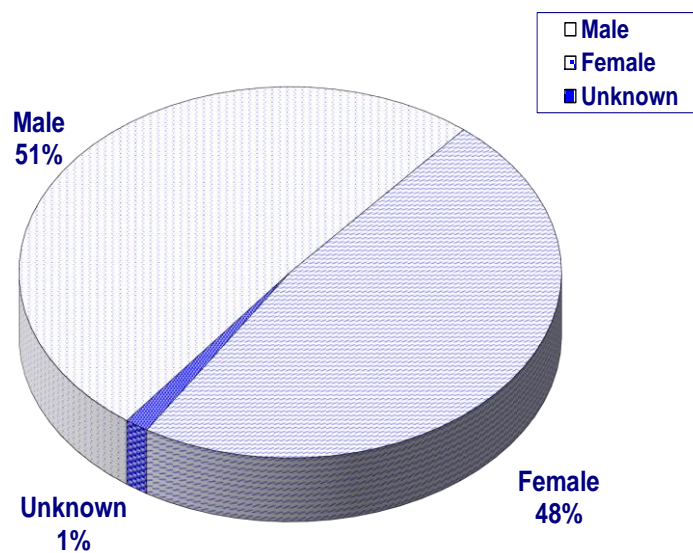
Region	Males	Females	Unreported	Total
Northeastern	185	156	7	348
Northern	1,526	1,506	40	3,072
West Central	294	226	9	529
Unknown	0	0	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>3,952</b>

**Table 3.** *Black bear kill by zone, 2013.*

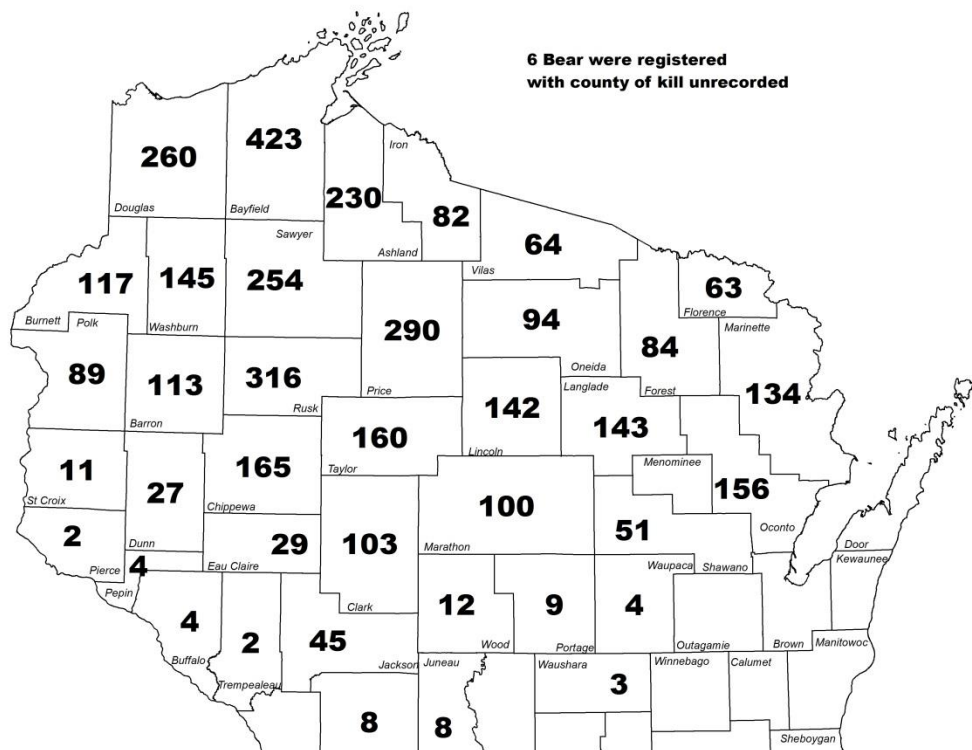
Zone	Males	Females	Unreported	Total
A	648	580	21	1,249
B	225	259	6	490
C	558	451	20	1,029
D	573	597	9	1,179
Unknown	1	1	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>3,952</b>



**Figure 1.** *The 2013 black bear kill by zone.*



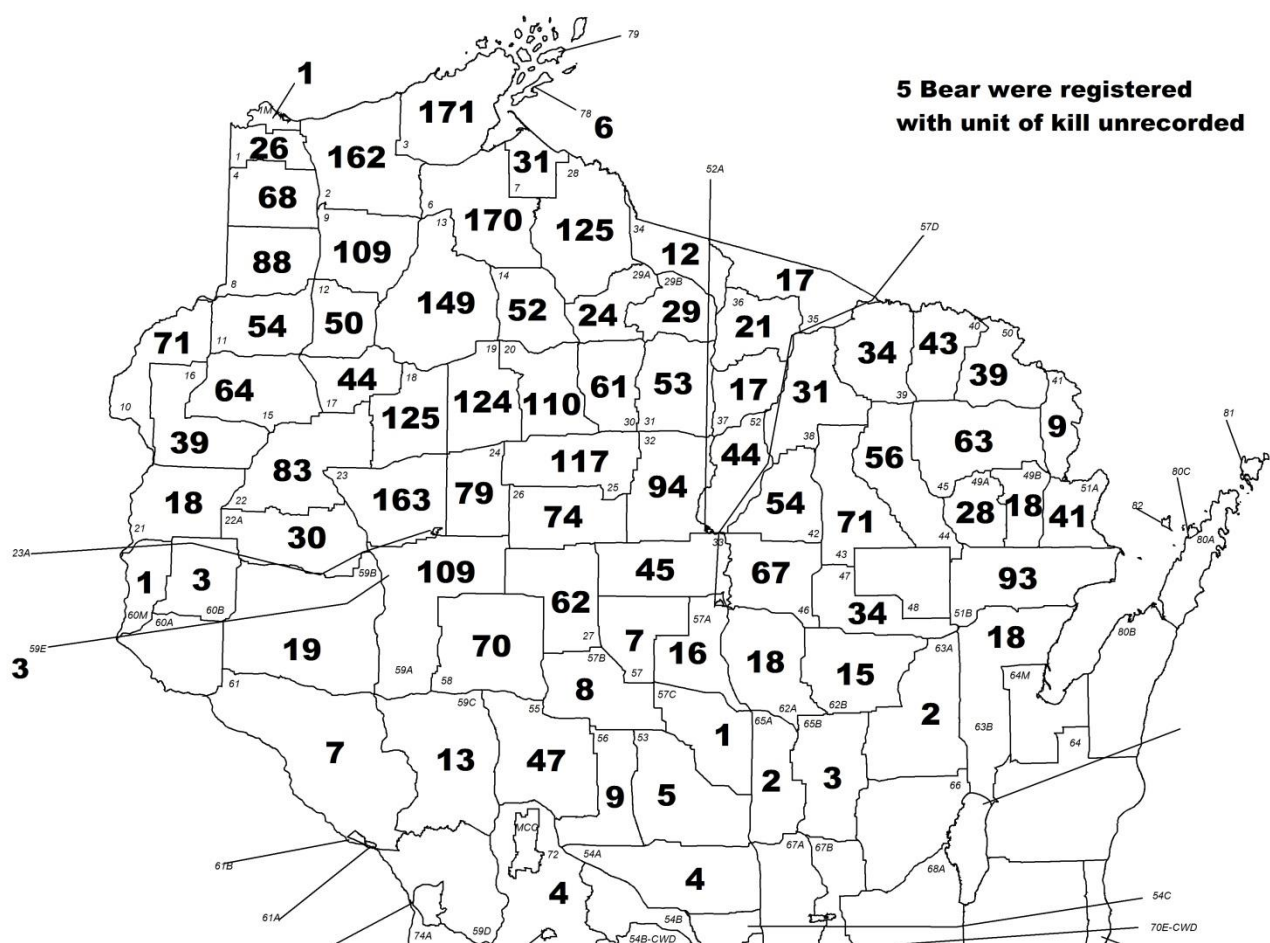
**Figure 2.** *The 2013 black bear harvest by sex.*



**Figure 3.** The 2013 black bear kill by county.

**Table 4.** The 2013 black bear kill by county and sex.

County	Males	Females	Un-reported	Total	County	Males	Females	Un-reported	Total
Ashland	141	87	2	230	Oconto	82	72	2	156
Barron	61	52	0	113	Oneida	51	43	0	94
Bayfield	199	218	6	423	Pepin	2	2	0	4
Buffalo	4	0	0	4	Pierce	2	0	0	2
Burnett	57	60	0	117	Polk	37	52	0	89
Chippewa	82	81	2	165	Portage	8	1	0	9
Clark	49	51	3	103	Price	150	139	1	290
Douglas	133	124	3	260	Rusk	146	164	6	316
Dunn	17	8	2	27	St. Croix	9	2	0	11
Eau Claire	13	16	0	29	Sawyer	122	125	7	254
Florence	26	37	0	63	Shawano	31	19	1	51
Forest	40	43	1	84	Taylor	81	77	2	160
Iron	46	36	0	82	Trempealeau	2	0	0	2
Jackson	24	21	0	45	Vilas	39	23	2	64
Juneau	5	3	0	8	Washburn	65	80	0	145
Langlade	61	79	3	143	Waupaca	3	1	0	4
Lincoln	70	65	7	142	Waushara	3	0	0	3
Marathon	64	35	1	100	Wood	8	3	1	12
Marquette	66	64	4	134	Unknown	1	2	3	6
Monroe	5	3	0	8	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>3,952</b>



**Figure 4.** *The 2013 black bear kill by deer management unit.*

**Table 5.** *The 2013 black bear kill by deer management unit and sex.*

Unit	Males	Females	Unks	Total	Unit	Males	Females	Unks	Total
1	12	14	0	26	40	16	27	0	43
2	97	63	2	162	41	2	7	0	9
3	66	102	3	171	42	23	30	1	54
4	37	31	0	68	43	32	39	0	71
6	99	68	3	170	44	28	28	0	56
7	13	18	0	31	45	22	39	2	63
8	34	54	0	88	46	35	31	1	67
9	50	57	2	109	47	22	10	2	34
10	31	40	0	71	49A	8	19	1	28
11	27	27	0	54	49B	12	6	0	18
12	22	28	0	50	50	22	17	0	39
13	73	73	3	149	51A	24	17	0	41
14	35	16	1	52	51B	51	39	3	93
15	27	37	0	64	52	20	23	1	44
16	19	20	0	39	53	3	2	0	5
17	22	22	0	44	54A	2	2	0	4
18	53	69	3	125	55	22	22	3	47
19	57	63	4	124	56	6	2	1	9
1M	1	0	0	1	57	5	2	0	7
20	50	60	0	110	57A	13	3	0	16
21	13	5	0	18	57B	7	1	0	8
22	44	39	0	83	57C	1	0	0	1
22A	15	15	0	30	58	27	43	0	70
23	80	81	2	163	59A	61	45	3	109
24	39	40	0	79	59B	12	5	2	19
25	65	52	0	117	59C	10	3	0	13
26	42	31	1	74	59E	2	1	0	3
27	27	35	0	62	60B	3	0	0	3
28	81	42	2	125	60M	1	0	0	1
29A	9	15	0	24	61	7	0	0	7
29B	17	11	1	29	62A	15	2	1	18
30	32	29	0	61	62B	9	6	0	15
31	25	28	0	53	63A	1	1	0	2
32	49	40	5	94	63B	10	7	1	18
33	23	21	1	45	65A	2	0	0	2
34	8	4	0	12	65B	2	1	0	3
35	9	7	1	17	72	2	2	0	4
36	14	7	0	21	78	2	4	0	6
37	5	12	0	17	Unk	1	1	3	5
38	21	10	0	31					
39	19	15	0	34	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>3,952</b>

**Table 6.** *The 2013 black bear kill by hunting method and weapon type (does not include Chippewa harvest of 35 bear).*

Method	Weapon			Total
	Bow	Gun	Unreported	
Dogs	22	672	0	694
Bait	510	2,135	4	2,649
Dogs and Bait	16	480	4	500
None	3	23	0	26
Unknown	5	39	4	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>3,349</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3,917</b>

## Black Bear Harvest History, 1957 - Present

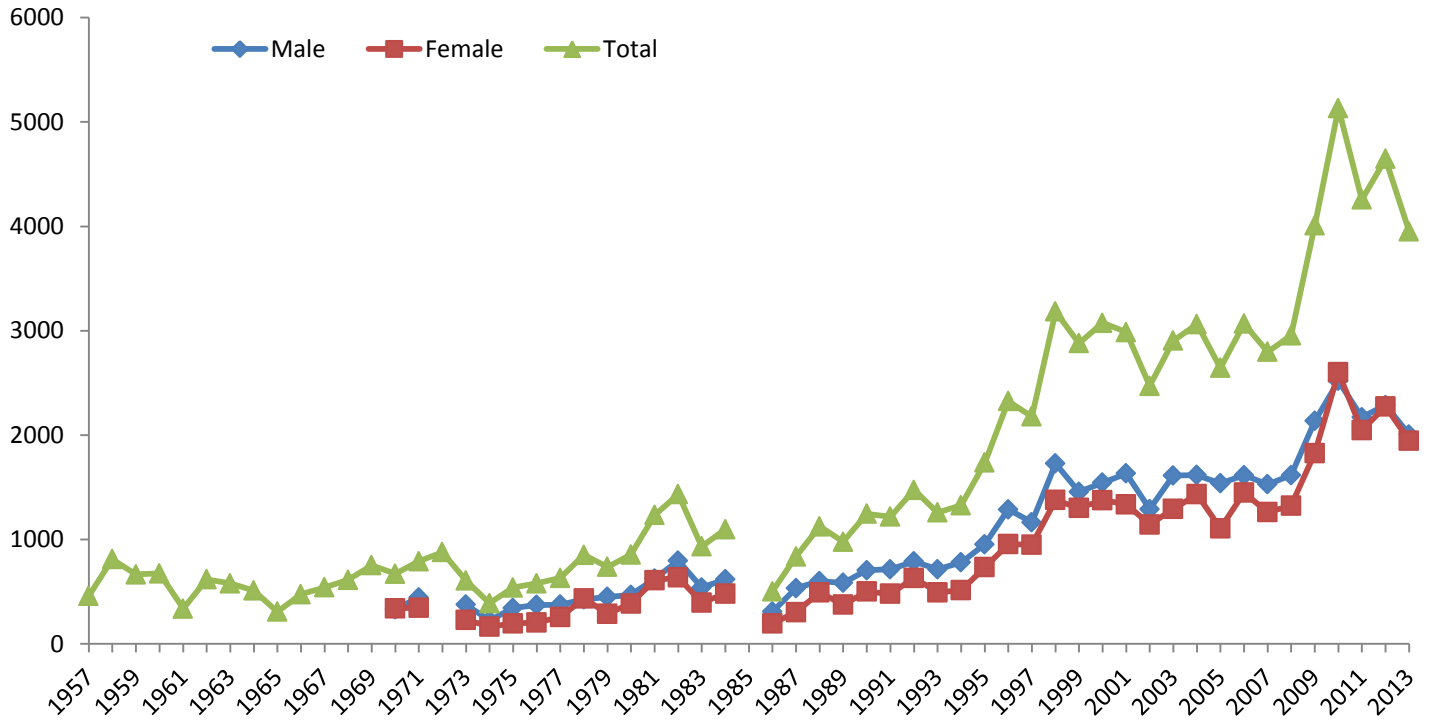


Figure 5. Black bear kill, 1957-2013.

Table 7. Black bear kill by sex, 1957-2013.

Year	Male	Female	Unk	Total	Year	Male	Female	Unk	Total
1957	---	---		460	1986	308	195		503
1958	---	---		811	1987	533	304		837
1959	---	---		665	1988	601	494	30	1,125
1960	---	---		675	1989	584	375	19	978
1961	---	---		337	1990	705	501	41	1,247
1962	----	---		617	1991	715	480	24	1,219
1963	---	---		579	1992	789	631	54	1,474
1964	---	---		511	1993	715	494	49	1,258
1965	---	---		308	1994	781	513	34	1,328
1966	---	---		475	1995	953	735	49	1,737
1967	---	---		541	1996	1,288	955	82	2,325
1968	---	---		613	1997	1,165	950	63	2,178
1969	---	---		752	1998	1,727	1,378	79	3,184
1970	331	341		672	1999	1,456	1,301	124	2,881
1971	444	347		791	2000	1,543	1,376	156	3,075
1972	---	---		878	2001	1,632	1,336	18	2,986
1973	376	230		606	2002	1,290	1,143	38	2,471
1974	224	166		390	2003	1,613	1,288	4	2,905
1975	344	195		539	2004	1,618	1,433	12	3,063
1976	373	206		579	2005	1,537	1,107	1	2,645
1977	375	256		631	2006	1,615	1,448	5	3,068
1978	426	436	10	872	2007	1,528	1,261	8	2,797
1979	449	288		737	2008	1,616	1,324	15	2,955
1980	469	386		855	2009	2,135	1,828	46	4,009
1981	624	610		1,234	2010	2,519	2,602	12	5,133
1982	797	636		1,433	2011	2,171	2,047	39	4,257
1983	539	395		934	2012	2,287	2,275	84	4,646
1984	617	480		1,097	2013	2,005	1,888	59	3,952
1985	No Season								



**Table 8.** *The 2013 Tribal black bear kill by deer management unit and sex<sup>1</sup>.*

Deer Unit	Male	Female	Totals
01	1	1	2
02	1	0	1
03	6	9	15
04	1	0	1
05	3	0	3
08	1	1	2
11	0	1	1
26	0	1	1
28	1	0	1
29B	1	0	1
32	1	0	1
34	0	1	1
36	1	0	1
44	2	0	2
Unknown	1	1	2
Totals	20	15	35

<sup>1</sup> These data are included in the statewide totals.

**Table 9.** *The number of black bear harvest permits issued and the number of applicants, 1974-2014.*

Year	Residents	Non-residents	No. Permits Issued	No. of Applicants
1974	3,459		3,459	3,459
1975	4,116		4,116	4,116
1976	4,899		4,899	4,899
1977	5,025		5,025	5,025
1978	6,283		6,283	6,283
1979	5,612	179	5,791	5,791
1980	6,352	171	6,523	6,523
1981	7,247	241	7,488	7,488
1982	8,142	224	8,366	8,366
1983	7,077	218	7,295	7,295
1984	6,439	320	6,759	6,759
1985	Season		Closed	
1986			840	8,289
1987			1,730	10,203
1988			1,663	10,208
1989			2,020	13,734
1990			2,825	15,988
1991			2,560	17,668
1992			2,620	19,415
1993			2,110	22,555
1994			2,175	25,799
1995			2,710	30,086
1996			4,570	35,356
1997			4,700	41,969
1998			5,860	44,928
1999			6,014	50,938
2000			6,598	50,601
2001			5,681	53,508
2002			4,985	54,879
2003			4,710	56,944
2004			4,741	61,726
2005			4,549	66,777
2006			4,277	68,821
2007			4,405	80,213
2008			4,660	86,138
2009			7,310	95,384
2010			8,910	97,467
2011			9,005	103,854
2012			9,015	104,391
2013			8,560	106,573
2014			10,340	108,271